

## Enclosure of letter from Eliza Symonds Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, March 29, 1876

### THE FUTURE.

When Englishmen read Macaulay's reference to the New Zealander who is to sit on the ruins of London Bridge and moralize over the city whose stupendous wreck he sees before him, they read with a great deal of complacency, and while doubting whether the thing will come to pass at all, feel very comfortable on the reflection that it can't happen in their day. They need not be quite so sure of that. Let them read the New York *Herald*, and they will see that the only thing that may be considered sure is that the New Zealander will run considerable risk of catching cold if he sits there long.

It was, long ago, proposed to cut a ship canal through the Isthmus of Darlen, and the proposition has been warmly supported and as warmly opposed, but only lately have all the possible effects of such an undertaking been brought into prominent notice. We ought perhaps, taking the New York *Herald* as our guide, to say the almost certain instead of possible effects, for on reading that journal's recent lengthy exposition on the subject we see with horror that its diabolical conundrum, "How may the world be revolutionized?" is answered in the calmest and most cold-blooded manner by the evidence of such scientific authorities as Sir John Herschel, Lieutenant Maury, Dr. Hayes, Captain Silas Bent (whoever he may have been), and other people. It appears that the Gulf Stream—that is, the one we know in the Atlantic, for the Japanese have one of their own—has such a violent longing to break away and get into the Pacific that it has hollowed out the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea in its efforts to get there. It has taken some time to do this, but "Time writes no wrinkles on its azure brow," we are told; so that, having no fear of old age, it has kept steadily on at its work, and has been brought up, as sailors would say, with a round turn only by the granite formation, which, like a person's back-bone, runs down

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from the head of the continent and, ending abruptly, permits the Gulf Stream to form that semi-circular curve which constitutes the lower limits of North America.

If a ship canal were cut through the Isthmus of Darlen, the Gulf Stream, we are given to understand, would, in plain language, make a rush at it, and, regardless of everyone's interests, would leave its old course and wander about Heaven knows where. The first thing that would happen—and we are told it in the quietest way possible—is the “annihilation of races,” and the next paragraph of Herschel tells us that our friends in England are the first race to be annihilated.

Labrador, we are shown, is a trifle to the glacial condition of the British Isles were they deprived of the Gulf Stream, and Western Europe (wherever that may extend) is in much the same predicament. Listen to it all in scientific language, and receive it in a properly serious frame of mind:—“The North Sea would resemble “Hudson's Bay, and its harbours be free “from ice at best only in summer. The “power and prosperity of its coasts would “shrivel under the breath of winter as “a Medusa thrown on shore shrinks to an “insignificant film under the influence of “the destructive atmosphere. Commerce, “industry, fertility of soil, population, “would disappear, and the vast waste, a “new Labrador, would become a worthless appendage of some clime more “favoured by nature.” So that if John Bull should ever again become bumptious—and he's terribly apt to fall away in that direction—the course which the future Seward will take is clear. There will be no more references to Geneva and Swiss Presidents, German Emperors, and people of this class no more Reverdy Johnson treaties and consequential damages; but just the engagement of a few thousand citizens in New York, each with a spade and wheelbarrow, and the immediate opening of the Isthmus o Darlen. Then, when the rivers of Great Britain shall have frozen to never-melting ice around the ill-fated vessels that had been tempted to their waters; when year by year the cities whose machinery has supplied the Chinese with his calico shirt, the Hindoo with his bummeround, and the Red Indian with his scalping knife, shall have disappeared beneath the fast accumulated snow; when the skins of animals shall have superseded the coats of Poole, and even the wig of the Lord Chancellor shall

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have proved insufficient to keep that dignitary's brains from freezing: when the New Zealander is packing up his portmanteau and snow shoes, and engaging his passage for the nearest seaport to Great Britain; then, when the race should be annihilated and Herschell justified—what happens? We must do as they do in the novels, and ask our readers to go back a little. Observe the language of the paragraph from Herschel which we quoted. The British Isles would become “a worthless “appendage of some clime more “favoured by nature.” Where is that clime? Is it Australia, with its parched desert and dried up streams? Certainly not. Is it South Africa, with its Kaffirs and Boors and Wait-a-bit thorns, and its generally objectionable features? Certainly not? Then where is it? It is Canada. Canada first, before all others. As the last spadeful of earth is taken out of the Isthmus of Darlen the rush will commence. From every port, from every river and bay along the coast of Great Britain, the frozen-out Englishman will come. The Scotchmen will have taken earlier warning, and will have already established themselves and be making money amongst us. But the Dukes and Earls and noble Lords of high degree, the gold sticks in waiting, the sliver sticks out of waiting, the Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chancellor, the Master of the Rolls and the Mistress of the Rolls, the soldiers and sailors and tinkers and tailors, the ploughboys, the apothecaries, and the thieves will all come. The House of Commons in one ship, under the command of Mr. Ward Hunt, who will take care that it is not an ironclad, will be preceded by another carrying the House of Lords. The lawyers will come, converting their blue bags, for the moment, into portmanteaus; the doctors will follow them, and even Mr. Whalley, if he can be persuaded that the Pope is not at the bottom of the thing, will be over with the rest to make friends with Mr. Mackenzie Bowell. Thus will the never-to-be annihilated race cheat the rancour of their rivals, and hurl defiance at the glory prophecies of scientific croakers. We shall have Dukes at Ottawa and Baronets at least in the Local House. Lords Cairns and Cockburn and Bramwell will be able to show our people how to wear those scarlet cloaks, and Mr. Blake and Sir John Macdonald will be enabled to fight it out with “the Law Officers of the Crown” on those burning questions that had to be referred. Dr. Tupper will be able to instruct Mr. Gladstone in finance while receiving lessons from that gentleman in the true application

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of the Iliad. Our sporting contemporary will be able to give Admiral Rous a shake-down, while Disraeli will be entertained at a banquet in the Canadian Carlton. That illustrious statesman will also be sworn to keep the peace with Mr. G—n S—h, and Senator Reed will be instructed by some of the Whitechapel bird-fanciers in the true way of flying pigeons over the Georgian Bay Railroad. From North to South, from East to West these brethren from across the sea will spread themselves throughout the Dominion and enter into friendly rivalry with those who are here before them. And here arises the question whether the British Isles are to be allowed to do this, or whether “reasonable protection to native employment,” &2, is not to be accorded, Her Gracious Majesty and her family will be ever welcome here as throughout any portion of the Empire, and we should of course buy the necessary gold sticks, and tig wigs, and satin breeches, and so forth: but whether a quantity of people with more money, and some of them with more brains, then some of us should be allowed to come over and make a slaughter market as it were of Canada, is a question. We don't see why native “high-tonenesa” should'nt be protected as well as other things, and if our aristocracy is to enter into competition with the other aristocracy without the latter being handicapped, we doubt whether the protectors of native stylishners will be satisfied. This must be thought of seriously.